

THREE GOALS UP— WYCOMBE SLUMP AGAINST TEN MEN

By "NOVA"

Wycombe Wanderers 3; Clapton 3

AFTER holding a three-goal lead inside 32 minutes, and facing only nine fit Clapton men for most of the second half, Wycombe Wanderers could only manage to share the Isthmian League points at Loakes Park on Saturday.

How they failed to gain both points baffles me, as it must the Wycombe players and selectors themselves. For in the middle period of the first half, Wycombe's rejuvenated forward line—with Peter James playing at inside right and Ray Howson moving over to inside-left in place of George Blair, who had flu—scored three times and looked set to run up their biggest home score of the season. But defensive errors put Clapton back in the game soon after half-time.

Inside 15 minutes Clapton were reduced to ten men, when inside-left Colin Norcott collided with Charlie Gale and was taken off the field to have stitches inserted in a head wound.

Norcott returned after 70 minutes, but minutes later the Clapton goalkeeper Mick Locker injured his arm in diving at the feet of John Beck.

Left-half Graham Belchamber took over in goal and Locker went to centre-forward. But despite this set-back, Clapton held out stoutly until the final whistle.

Why the Wycombe forwards did not shoot at every opportunity when Locker was injured is one of the game's unsolved mysteries. Another is why Tony Horseman was almost starved of the ball in the second-half. Len Worley looked dangerous in possession, but he failed to draw his full-back onto the tackle and was forced to centre from the edge of the penalty area every time, whereas Horseman often beat veteran Laurie Wilkinson and squared the ball back delightfully.

Often Wycombe have had to rely on Worley to make the chances but now, with Horseman playing well on the other wing it should be possible to use both equally.

Gale may be partly blamed for this lack of service, for although he played well defensively he did not push the ball through to Horseman anything like the number of times Thomas did to Worley.

Dave Thomas returned to top form in this game, tackling tigerishly and passing brilliantly at times. He, in fact, went closer than anyone to winning the game for Wycombe, when in the last few minutes he tried a shot, which Belchamber saved magnificently.

Behind Thomas John Beck was in inspiring mood. He tackled Ken Pope out of the game and found time to be more menacing than some of the forwards.

Peter James, besides scoring two goals, had several rasping shots well saved. He looked distinctly better than Jimmy Hay, who had taken the centre-forward spot from him. Hay had a miserable time against the massive Clapton pivot Ted Hill.

Wycombe scored their first goal after 25 minutes when a neat move between Howson and Thomas enabled Hay to elude Hill for the first and only time in the game to score. Straight from the kick-off Wycombe swept back to the attack and, after Thomas and Beck had shots saved, Thomas instigated another move for Worley to centre to James, who headed in.

Four minutes later Fisher slipped a pass through to James who scored from 25 yards out.

Just before half-time, however, Pope centred from the left-wing for centre-forward Vibert to evade Fisher and hit the ball past Brown.

Within a couple of minutes of the start of the second-half Clapton were on level terms. While Thomas was lying writhing on the ground, with Worley going to his aid, Heywood drew Fisher before placing the ball for right-winger Bussell to score.

A minute later Bussell returned the compliment by smashing a shot against Brown's chest for Heywood to run in and score.

CLAPTON HUMBLE 3-GOAL WYCOMBE

Wycombe W 3 Clapton 3

CLAPTON, three goals down at one stage and playing for most of the game with only 10 men, fought back to snatch a well deserved Isthmian League point.

Clapton lost inside-left Colin Norcott after 15 minutes, and while he was having six stitches in a head wound in hospital Wycombe scored three goals in seven minutes, the first from centre-forward Hay after 25 minutes, and two from James a few minutes later.

After Vibert had made it 3-1 five minutes before half time, Clapton equalised three minutes after the interval with two quick goals from the busy right-wing pair Bussell and Heywood.

Although Norcott returned midway through the second half, Clapton lost their goalkeeper Mike Locker, who injured his hand and had to move into the attack.

Left-half Graham Belchamber, who took over in goal, was Clapton's hero in the last 10 minutes with a succession of plucky saves.